

§ 2700.81

shall allow the party represented by the person a reasonable time to engage another representative. In all instances of removal of a person for disruptive conduct, the Judge shall place in the record a written statement on the matter. A party aggrieved by a Judge's order of removal may appeal by requesting interlocutory review pursuant to § 2700.76 or, alternatively, may assign the Judge's ruling as error in a petition for discretionary review.

[58 FR 12164, Mar. 3, 1993, as amended at 71 FR 44209, Aug. 4, 2006]

§ 2700.81 Recusal and disqualification.

(a) *Recusal.* A Commissioner or a Judge may recuse himself from a proceeding whenever he deems such action appropriate.

(b) *Request to withdraw.* A party may request a Commissioner or a Judge to withdraw on grounds of personal bias or other disqualification. A party shall make such a request by promptly filing an affidavit setting forth in detail the matters alleged to constitute personal bias or other grounds for disqualification.

(c) *Procedure if Commissioner or Judge does not withdraw.* If, upon being requested to withdraw pursuant to paragraph (b) of this section, the Commissioner or the Judge does not withdraw from the proceeding, he shall so rule upon the record, stating the grounds for his ruling. If the Judge does not withdraw, he shall proceed with the hearing, or, if the hearing has been completed, he shall proceed with the issuance of his decision, unless the Commission stays the hearing or further proceedings upon the granting of a petition for interlocutory review of the Judge's decision not to withdraw.

§ 2700.82 Ex parte communications.

(a) For purposes of this section, the following definitions shall apply:

(1) *Ex parte communication* means an oral or written communication not on the public record concerning any matter or proceeding with respect to which reasonable prior notice to all parties has not been given. A status or informational request does not constitute an ex parte communication.

(2) *Status or informational request* means a request for a status report on

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any matter or proceeding or a request concerning filing requirements or other docket information.

(3) *Merits of a case*, which shall be broadly construed by the Commission, includes discussion of the factual or legal issues in a case or resolution of those issues.

(b) *Prohibited ex parte communication.* There shall be no ex parte communication with respect to the merits of a case not concluded, between the Commission, including any member, Judge, officer, or agent of the Commission who is employed in the decisional process, and any of the parties, intervenors, representatives, amici, or other interested persons.

(c) *Procedure in case of violation.* (1) In the event a prohibited ex parte communication occurs, the Commission or the Judge may make such orders or take such action to remedy the effect of the ex parte communication as circumstances require. Upon notice and hearing, the Commission may take disciplinary action against any person who knowingly and willfully makes or causes to be made a prohibited ex parte communication.

(2) A memorandum setting forth all ex parte communications, whether prohibited or not, shall be placed on the public record of the proceeding.

(d) *Inquiries.* Any inquiries concerning filing requirements, the status of cases before the Commission, or docket information shall be directed to the Office of General Counsel or the Docket Office of the Federal Mine Safety and Health Review Commission, 601 New Jersey Avenue, NW., Suite 9500, Washington, DC 20001.

[58 FR 12164, Mar. 3, 1993, as amended at 67 FR 60862, Sept. 27, 2002]

§ 2700.83 Authority to sign orders.

The Chairman or other designated Commissioner is authorized to sign on behalf of the Commissioners, orders disposing of the following procedural motions: motions for extensions of time, motions for permission to file briefs in excess of page limits, motions to accept late filed briefs, motions to consolidate, motions to expedite proceedings, motions for oral argument, and similar procedural motions. A person aggrieved by such an order may,

within 10 days of the date of the order, file a motion requesting that the order be signed by the participating Commissioners.

Subpart J—Simplified Proceedings

SOURCE: 75 FR 81462, Dec. 28, 2010, unless otherwise noted.

§ 2700.100 Purpose.

(a) The purpose of this Simplified Proceedings subpart is to provide simplified procedures for resolving civil penalty contests under the Federal Mine Safety and Health Act of 1977, so that parties before the Commission may reduce the time and expense of litigation while being assured due process and a hearing that meets the requirements of the Administrative Procedure Act, 5 U.S.C. 554. These procedural rules will be applied to accomplish this purpose.

(b) Procedures under this subpart are simplified in a number of ways. The major differences between these procedures and those that would otherwise apply in subparts A, C, G, H, and I of this part are as follows.

(1) Answers to petitions for assessment of penalty are not required.

(2) Motions are eliminated to the greatest extent practicable.

(3) Early discussions among the parties and the Administrative Law Judge are required to narrow and define the disputes between the parties.

(4) The parties are required to provide certain materials early in the proceedings.

(5) Discovery is not permitted except as ordered by the Administrative Law Judge.

(6) Interlocutory appeals are not permitted.

(7) The administrative process is streamlined, but hearings will be full due process hearings. The parties will argue their case orally before the Judge at the conclusion of the hearing instead of filing briefs. In many instances, the Judge will render a decision from the bench.

§ 2700.101 Eligibility for simplified proceedings.

Cases designated for Simplified Proceedings will not involve fatalities, in-

juries or illnesses, and will generally include one or more of the following characteristics:

(a) The case involves only citations issued under section 104(a) of the Mine Act.

(b) The proposed penalties were not specially assessed under 30 CFR 100.5.

(c) The case does not involve complex issues of law or fact.

(d) The case involves a limited number of citations to be determined by the Chief Judge or designee.

(e) The case involves a limited penalty amount to be determined by the Chief Judge or designee.

(f) The case will involve a hearing of limited duration to be determined by the Chief Judge or designee.

(g) The case does not involve only legal issues.

(h) The case does not involve expert witnesses.

§ 2700.102 Commission commencement of simplified proceedings.

(a) *Designation.* Upon receipt of a petition for assessment of penalty, the Chief Administrative Law Judge, or designee, has the authority to designate an appropriate case for Simplified Proceedings.

(b) *Notice of designation.* After a case has been designated for Simplified Proceedings, the Commission will issue a Notice of Designation for Simplified Proceedings. The Notice will inform parties that the case has been designated for Simplified Proceedings, state the name and contact information for the Commission Administrative Law Judge assigned to the case, provide instructions for filing a notice of appearance in the Simplified Proceedings, and state that the operator need not file an answer to the petition for assessment of penalty. The Commission will send the notice of designation to the parties' addresses listed on the petition for assessment of penalty.

(c) *Notice of appearance.* Unless the contact information described in this paragraph has already been provided to the Judge, within 15 calendar days after receiving a notice of designation, the parties shall file notices of appearance with the assigned Judge. Each notice of appearance shall provide the following information for the counsel or